

veterans legislation over the past two and a half years, I am very glad that this motion is being debated today. The debate will unquestionably serve to raise public consciousness of the crucial role played by the Merchant Marine and the House can be assured that the Minister will be very much interested in the views expressed today.

**Mr. George Henderson (Egmont):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak on the motion presented by the Hon. Member for Vancouver—Kingsway (Mr. Waddell). I must say I am glad the Hon. Member did bring this motion forward because I can see some great merit in it.

I understand a little about what happened during the Second World War. I certainly was not very old in 1945, but I was old enough at 10 years of age to remember. Coming from Atlantic Canada, I remember quite clearly and vividly the sights which could be seen in Halifax Harbour when the merchant fleet would line up in Bedford Basin and the convoys would leave Halifax Harbour for England, mainly, to deliver supplies to the Armed Forces. Probably not too many members in the House realize, although some of the older Members and those who are actual veterans of the Second World War would understand well, that one did not have to go too far outside of Halifax Harbour, for instance, to McNabs Island, before one was into some pretty dangerous waters during the Second World War.

The German U'-boats were lying off Halifax Harbour and there was great difficulty experienced by our Armed Forces and, indeed, by those in the merchant fleet serving Canada and supporting the Armed Forces in its very important role. Many merchant ships left Halifax Harbour never to return.

The same thing can be said for St. John's, Newfoundland. St. John's had an excellent harbour and for those Members of Parliament who have visited St. John's for a time will surely know what its harbour is like. It has a very small entrance and one can look down from Cabot Tower right across to the other side. It does not seem to be much of a distance. However, during the war there was a ship sunk right at the dock in St. John's Harbour by a torpedo which came right in through the entrance to the harbour. It was a direct hit. A lot of areas in Atlantic Canada were very close to the Second World War, both in terms of the number of people who served in the Armed Forces in Europe and at home as enlisted members of the Armed Forces as well as those in the marine service.

It is well documented that during the Second World War there were quite a number of German submarines which frequented the waters of the Gulf of St. Lawrence and created a very dangerous situation for our merchant fleet and Armed Forces vessels.

The Parliamentary Secretary spoke of how the six months was arrived at in Parliament back in 1962. However, I think in 1987 it is time we took another look at it. I understand the complication which can arise because one trip could mean one day. However, that is sort of bureaucratic thinking. I am sure it could be straightened out to the satisfaction of those who

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served. They are entitled, in my opinion, and in the opinion of many other Hon. Members in this Chamber, to receive some compensation for their efforts. It only takes one hit. Many of those who served in the Merchant Marine can testify to that.

I believe the number of merchant seamen who qualify under the provisions of the Act as it now stands is something around 4,000. I do not see too many more being qualified if this Act was changed to what the Hon. Member for Vancouver—Kingsway is suggesting, that one trip through dangerous waters would be the only qualification necessary.

We have to look as well at those who were in the merchant fleet in 1945. The very youngest would probably be around 49 or 59 years of age. Some of them went to sea when they were pretty young, at 16 or 17 years of age. This is 1987 so they would be now around 58 years to 60 years. Most of them are, of course, 65 years and over. I do not see that it would be a tremendous drain on the Treasury at this time to recognize these people in a more meaningful way.

I went to sea a bit myself, certainly not in war-time, but in the late 1960s, sailing from Yarmouth to Bar Harbour, Maine. Everytime I sailed that route I thought about the number of vessels and the problems which occurred to those vessels in the waters off the Bay of Fundy, up through Louisbourg, around Cape Breton and on to Newfoundland. Those were very treacherous areas during the war.

I just want to say that I would like to support, on behalf of my Party, this motion before us today. I hope all Members of Parliament will look upon this in the right spirit and that we can present this motion to the Minister.

● (1450)

I must compliment the Minister. He has been a very good Minister of Veterans Affairs (Mr. Hees). I had the opportunity, along with the Parliamentary Secretary, to visit Holland with him on the fortieth anniversary of the liberation of The Netherlands and Italy. I was proud of our Minister of Veterans Affairs on that visit. We visited the graves of those who lost their lives in the Second World War. I am equally proud of the representations he made recently on behalf of Canada and our veterans on the seventieth anniversary of Vimy Ridge.

I will end on this note. It is incumbent upon each and every one of us as Parliamentarians to do whatever we can to help our veterans, both those enlisted and those who served Canada well in a supportive role, either in the merchant navy or by other means. It is through their efforts and the efforts of many of our allies that we are able to participate in debate in this Parliament here today in a free and democratic society. It is something that we must never forget. Parliament should be directing its efforts in whatever ways possible now and in the future, not only to support those who have served but to work toward peace from now until eternity.

**Mr. Nelson A. Riis (Kamloops—Shuswap):** Mr. Speaker, I too consider it to be a privilege to have an opportunity this